



Press Release

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Corps of Engineers eases width limits at Melvin Price Locks

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers eased width restrictions for barge tows transiting the Melvin Price Locks near Alton, Ill., Saturday, February 17. Extreme cold for the past two weeks had built up ice on the lock's concrete walls, eventually requiring a limit of 89 feet within the 110-foot wide, 1200-foot long main chamber. This has been lifted to 105 feet wide, the width of a standard three barge-wide tow.

Corps officials backed off restrictions after sunshine finally reduced the ice build up on the left descending, or Illinois wall (side closest to the Illinois shore) of the lock. Ice on the other wall was reduced by lock operators using steam and hot water to thaw it.

At the location of the Melvin Price Locks, the Mississippi River actually runs from west to east and the concrete lock chambers are oriented in that manner. Thus the wall on the left side receives sunshine throughout much of the day while the wall on the right, or on the chamber's south side, is shaded from the sun.

In a notice to navigation interests, the Corps noted that there are not at this time any length restrictions beyond those normal normally in place for the main chamber, but that ice continues to hamper movement upstream of the locks.

Vessel operators are being cautioned to follow any instructions of the Lockmaster while approaching or operating within the lock chamber.

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